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3 Sister cities

Melle Smets (artist) and Foundation De Barak are the initiators of the project “3 Sister cities” (twin towns, or partnership towns). The “3 Sister cities” project aims to create a partnership between heritage institutions in Lelystad, the Netherlands, Marl, Germany and Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. The objective is to contribute culture-wise by researching the role of young cultural heritage in the forming of identity of new towns. The research will result in a sustainable cultural contribution to the towns.

Lelystad, Marl and Louvain-la-Neuve were all built between the sixties and seventies, and are the results of a careful utopic planning process. As ‘new towns’ they are built as ideals of the twentieth century. According to the International New Town Institute (INTI) these towns have many problems in common. In the view of this project the following are noteworthy: they lack cultural facilities, collective history and a common identity.

Foundation De Barak from Lelystad and Melle Smets, initiator of the project, wishes to research and compare the cultural and urban aspects of the three cities, so that a new impulse is possible through the ties that bind Lelystad, Marl and Louvain-la-Neuve due to their “date of birth”.

Bonds between cities are known as ‘twin towns’ or ‘sister cities’, but equal learning and sharing of knowledge is usually not the case. With this project we aim to create a connection with benefits to each town, based on a common background and similar cultural difficulties.

Therefore a group of professionals are effectuating research to compare the cities. The members of this professional group are:

Melle Smets, www.mellesmets.nl

Christiaan Fruneaux and Edwin Gardner, www.monnik.org

Mark Minkjan, Tim Verlaan and René de Boer, failedarchitecture.com

Theo Deutinger and Stefanos Fillipas, td-architects.eu

Yumemi Kobayashi, Masters fine art student HKU

Gayane Yerkanyan, Masters fine art student HKU

The project “3 Sister cities” aims to create a sustainable cultural contribution to the three cities by conducting research of young cultural heritage and the creation of identity in Lelystad, Marl and Louvain-la-Neuve. The researchers are also tasked with the development of novel forms of presentation. The international cooperation between the heritage institutions should result in a creative process focused on solidarity, not only between the cities but between the residents of each new town as well. Our goal is to achieve a sustainable partnership that is beneficial to the audiences in each town.